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HB 1129

MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH ON THE ISLAND OF KAHOO LAWE

Statement for
House Committee on Culture and the Arts
Public Hearing
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by

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HB 1129 proposes an appropriation for archeological and historical research on the island of Kahoolawe. This statement is being submitted for review to the Legislative Subcommittee of the Environmental Center of the University of Hawaii. It does not, however, reflect an institutional position of the University.

Kahoolawe appears to be a unique, cultural resource which in some respects is a veritable time capsule of life in ancient Hawaii. The principal damage deriving from its use as a bombing and artillery target seems to be confined to a limited part of the island. Also, since there has been no farming on Kahoolawe, there has not been the wholesale destruction of surface structures and shallow sites through bulldozing that is found on other Hawaiian islands. Discoveries there, to date, include a very large and well-prescribed stone adze quarry and workshop complex (second in size only to the one on Mauna Kea), the largest obsidian quarry and workshop in the islands, numerous small habitation and task specific sites, and at least one large and probably permanent village site. We know now that Kahoolawe was not, as previously thought, simply a kind of "stopover" site for fishermen and other short-term visitors, but that it had a full-time Hawaiian population of its own.

HB 1129 deserves support and passage to allow the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to continue work already undertaken there. The research to date has proven very productive and worthwhile and an adequate evaluation of the remaining archeological materials, as well as collection of oral histories is necessary. The information will allow placement of sites on the State and Federal registers of historic places, and potentially provide concomitant protection. Furthermore, the rich cultural remains and the history they reveal will become much more available to the people of the State.

On the Mainland, there is growing recognition by the public of the losses that have occurred when unique cultural remains have been destroyed without any effort at adequate documentation and/or restoration. HB 1129 represents constructive action to avoid such loss. Without the DLNR study, no systematic, complete coverage can be realized.